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# WHOSE BOSTON?

An Engaged Scholarship Course

*“The past isn’t dead. It isn’t even past.”*

- William Faulkner

**The** city you will live in for the next four years is one of the most visited places in the United States, and at the heart of the lucrative tourist trade lies the Freedom Trail. We promote ourselves nationally and globally as the birthplace of the American Revolution, but it also trades on its past as the home of the Mayflower settlers and Salem witches in the 17<sup>th</sup> century and the heart of Transcendentalist thought and American literature in the 19<sup>th</sup> century. If there is any city whose present, whose very economy, is driven by its past, it is Boston.

But whose past? Whose stories do we tell? And how does that shape our present?

This course will examine the role of monuments and cityscapes in creating public memory and collective identity. We will ask whose stories are written into the city, and learn to read tours, statues, and plaques as texts. What are these bits of the city telling us? How are they interpreted and presented to visitors? Who is written into history – and who is written out? Throughout we will focus on the myriad ways arguments present themselves. A tourist talk, a description of a statue, or a history lecture – all of these are arguments. You will learn to read them, and then learn how to effectively make them yourself.

**In** the first unit, we will look at the most famous icon of Boston tourism: the Freedom Trail. You will take a public tour of the trail to analyze who is present – whose stories are featured, and what messages do these narratives convey to visitors and citizens?

Next, you will dive into the scholarly debates on public memory. How do monuments and tourist sites shape public narratives, and collective memory? How is ‘who we are’ shaped by what we remember? Monuments have been called “memory set in stone” but what those monuments mean, and how we interact with them, can change over time. (If you don’t believe me, just rewatch the footage from Charlottesville two years ago!) You will learn an invaluable skill in college: using another scholar’s ideas as a ‘lens’ to improve your own analysis.

Finally, we will put all these skills to practical use. Working together we will identify and research locations representing stories that are not normally told about Boston – the stories more often left out. You will create research papers and try to explain why they have been left off the main tourist maps. But we will also translate these arguments to methods less conventional academic: you will be trained by one of Boston’s leading tour guiding and heritage associations to interpret historical sites and help bring the past to life. The capstone of the course will be our own walking tour – offered to the public – of the sites we have researched. You will work in teams of three to create compelling interpretations of historic sites. How can the kinds of arguments you make in a paper translate to oral presentations, and how can you make those ideas both accessible and compelling? We will make sure that these ideas live on by creating an interactive map of our tour with embedded video and text.

Whose Boston does the cityscape represent? Whose histories matter? And who has the power to decide what counts as important? This semester, you will.

\* If speaking in public sounds like pure hell to you don’t worry – each team will have the option of one or two people whose work is more behind the scenes!

# What's the deal with office hours?

## On making your own education

*“The wise man doesn't give the right answers, he poses the right questions.” – Claude Levi-Strauss*

Learning to reach out for help is one of the hardest things you will do in college. But, if you are like I was in college, it may be because you don't even know what you don't know. You don't know what to ask, or why you'd come to office hours – but my students have universally found office hours to be one of their favorite experiences. So here are a few good reasons for coming:

1. Just to get to know me/your professor: In any class it helps to have a personal connection established early. In this class, that's required with introductory conferences, but where it's not, it's still a good idea to drop by.
2. To ask a question: but please, not something that's on the syllabus. There's no “dumb question” (except things that are on the syllabus). Even if your question is half formed (“this bit of the reading just seemed... weird”) it is worth asking. Anything that snags your attention has a mystery hidden inside.
3. To eat snacks: I usually have snacks. AT THE VERY LEAST I have my bottomless drawer of dumdums.
4. **To hear what others have to ask.** This is (fairly) unique to how I run expos. If you come talk to me, and someone is already there, you'll be invited to join (unless you explicitly ask, ahead of time, for privacy.) So maybe you don't have a question – if you're in the neighborhood, it can't hurt to stop by and see what OTHERS are concerned about. It might trigger questions for you, or cause you to realize you didn't understand something you thought you knew. It simply can't hurt. Plus:
5. Snacks! Also feel free to bring your own.

Office hours: like class, but snackier.

Room 233, 1 Bow Street  
Wednesdays, 3:30-5

*(If you can't make these hours, email me to set up an appointment)*

# The Contract

## What I expect from you

The skills of writing will take a lifetime of development. No one arrives at the final destination of being a good writer; rather, you continually become one. Regardless of your high school experience, there is always more to learn - new skills to incorporate and old ones to improve. This course rests on several vital premises, which will guide our work this semester

- **Writing is a process:** this semester we will explore what it means to develop an idea through the process of writing. You will often hear me refer to “writing as thinking,” and this is what I mean - the emphasis is not on the final product, but on the way your ideas emerged as you created it. While many of us dream for a spark of perfect inspiration, relying on it is no more realistic than assuming you’ll pay your debts through a lottery. Instead, writers discover, refine and revise our ideas by writing about them. This course will ask you to engage in writing response papers and drafts as you build towards a final paper, so you will never again worry that you “have nothing to write about.” There’s no mystery here, but there is a process that you need to trust and to try.
- **Writing is a conversation:** when we write, especially in an academic context, we are writing in conversation with other scholars. We are responding to the ideas we find in sources and entering into critical debates and dialogues. What this means in a more concrete way is this: you are not expected to reinvent the wheel. When I ask you for an original argument, I do not mean something so novel that no one has ever conceived of its like before, but rather that you contribute to the discussion. As in a classroom conversation, worthy input builds on the ideas of others.
- **Writing is never finished:** for each paper, we will workshop two papers as a class. You will also, for each of three papers, have an individual conference with me, as well as feedback on a draft. Even when you turn in your final paper, you should expect my comments to include skills to pay attention to next time. This amount of feedback will likely be new to you, and possibly overwhelming, but consider it a rare opportunity. We will be discussing constantly how these skills and this feedback transfer to your other courses. Rarely, if ever, are students in any university setting afforded this much time to revise and work on writing skills. Putting the work in here and now will pay off for years to come.

## What you can expect from me

A syllabus is a contract, and I consider that a two-way road. In return, you can expect from me: reasonable turn around times (never more than 2 weeks); good communication (email replies w/i 24 hours, except on weekends—I will never tire of explaining myself until you understand a concept completely, if my first try doesn’t work, please ask for another way of explaining it); reasonable assignments (I abhor busy work, and consider everything I assign essential... that’s why there’s comparatively little reading); engagement outside class (I am always available for office hours, and happy to meet by appointment); and a prepared instructor, ready and eager to meet you every Tuesday and Thursday with an open mind.

# How this works in practice

## Class Policies

### Communication

The course works best when we treat it as a semester-long *conversation* about your writing. To make that conversation possible, there are a few important things to remember:

- **Conferences**: We will have three conferences throughout the semester, in between the first draft and final version of each essay. These conferences are the heart of expos our chance to work closely on your writing and to focus your work in revision, and are most worthwhile when you are the one to guide them. *Please come to each conference prepared* – having reviewed your essay, considered your questions, and begun to think about revision possibilities and strategies. You should plan on taking notes during our discussions. Please bring a notebook and pen or your computer. A startling number of student evaluations have said something like “conference was great but I wish I’d known how important it was, she should have told us to take it seriously.” So I guess take it seriously? I sort of expect you to take everything seriously but maybe this ... more so. Since the schedule during conference days is so tight, **missed conferences may not be rescheduled.**

In addition to our formal conferences, you are of course very, very welcome to come see me during office hours about your developing ideas – here you will also have the invaluable input of whoever else happens to be hanging out and snacking - or to set up another time to meet if office hours aren’t convenient.

- **E-mail**: Rather than take up our class time with announcements and administrative arrangements (and there will be many of them), I use e-mail to communicate most of that information. As part of your participation in the course, I ask that you check your Harvard e-mail account daily; you are responsible for the information I post there. Likewise, I make sure to check mine once every weekday for questions from you. Please note that I don’t check Harvard e-mail later than 6:00 p.m., but I do get up early. I can answer most questions within 24 hours, except over the weekend.

### Class Participation

One of the benefits of Expos is its small class size. That benefit is best realized when every student participates fully in the class; as in any seminar, you learn much more from formulating, articulating, and questioning your own thoughts than from simply listening to what others have to say. It is too easy for listening to become a passive exercise. Our time together is largely devoted to discussion and small-group work. Therefore you are responsible for being in class, prepared and on time, each time we meet. "Being prepared" means that you have given careful thought to the reading and writing assigned for the day, and that you are ready to offer ideas and questions to open our discussion. As a former student said in an evaluation "this class is what you make of it – if you come prepared, it's a fun time." I will add that if you don't come prepared, it's no fun for anyone.

**If you struggle with participation:** please come talk to me! I have a bunch of tips and tricks for making this a little bit easier for you. Fundamentally, learning the difficult skill of trusting your own voice and ideas is vital to thriving at Harvard and after, so I will not lower the importance of your participation. But I will happily and enthusiastically work with you to make it easier.

## **Grades**

The majority of your grade comes from your three essays, according to the following breakdown: Essay #1 = 20%; Essay #2 = 25%; Essay #3 = 35%. The standard for each essay also becomes more demanding as we progress (since you are building on certain fundamental skills and techniques with each essay). At the end of the course you will turn in your final Cover Letter so you can assess your own progress over the semester (so save all your work!). 15% of your grade represents a serious measure of your completion of response papers, your constructive participation in class discussion and conferences, and the care with which you respond to fellow students' work. *Your participation grade will drop by 1/3 of a letter grade for every response paper that is more than 48 hours late.* The final 5% is for your work on the group conference in unit 3 (more on that later).

## **Attendance and Lateness**

Because Expos has a shorter semester and fewer class hours than other courses, and because instruction in Expos proceeds by sequential writing activities, your consistent attendance is essential. **It is an official program-wide policy that if you are absent without medical or religious excuse more than twice, you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.** On your second unexcused absence, you will receive a letter warning you of your situation.

You are expected to let me know promptly if you have missed or will miss a class; you remain responsible for the work due that day and for any new work assigned. Apart from religious holidays, only medical absences can be excused. In those circumstances, you should contact me before class (or within 24 hours); you may need to provide a note from UHS or another medical official, or from your Freshman Dean. Absences because of special events, such as athletic meets, debates, conferences, and concerts are not excusable absences. If such an event is very important to you, you may decide to take one of your two allowable unexcused absences, letting me know in advance. Believe me – I don't judge. I just have to uphold department-wide policy. If you wish to attend an event that will put you over the two-absence limit, you must *directly petition the Director of Expository Writing*, who will grant such a petition only in extraordinary circumstances and only when your work in the class has been exemplary.

Class begins promptly at seven minutes past the hour. Three latenesses of more than ten minutes will be counted as an absence. Hey! This syllabus is getting long, isn't it? Take a second to send me an email confirming you've read this far. And then read the next bit carefully. I have some feelings about computers.

## **Computer Policy**

Study after study has shown that notes taken by hand are vastly more useful tool than those taken on a computer. A lifetime of existing in the world has shown that when we're behind computers, we shut down. To encourage the best classroom discussions and full engagement in the class **laptops are not allowed** EXCEPT on days when I specifically tell you to bring them. You may have noticed there are no required texts for this course. Everything we read will be PDFs of chapters or articles. ***If we are discussing and article or document in class, please print it out and bring it with you.*** (This will still come out cheaper than one single book).

# Assigned Work

## Reading

From unit 1 onwards we will focus on how good writing also has to do with good reading. I will ask you to really pick apart texts, and to linger on them. Skimming isn't too helpful here – I try to keep the reading very light, but that's not to make it “easy.” **Print out all your readings.** Especially with primary sources make sure you read with a pen in hand, and plan to read most primary sources at least twice.

## Response papers

At an almost moral level, I don't believe in busy work. I won't ever make you read something that isn't relevant to your writing. And I never assign a response paper that I don't know to have a genuine purpose. If you trust me on nothing else, trust me on this: the more work you put in early, the less you try to knock out responses in as little time as possible, the more you will get out of this course and the less time you will spend panicking. Any response paper that is more than 48 hours late will result in a 1/3 letter grade drop in your participation grade.

## Submitting Essays

You will turn in drafts and revisions on the course website or via email. Please be sure to check the syllabus for details on where or when things are due, and pay careful attention to the general guidelines about format, etc. explained at the end of this syllabus.

When you are uploading documents to the website or emailing me, you are responsible for submitting versions that I can open. (The document must either be in Microsoft Word or be easily compatible; your file should end in .doc or .docx – please, please, for the love of everything holy, do not send me a .pages file or PDF) It is also your responsibility to ensure that the file you are sending is not corrupted or damaged. If I cannot open or read the file you have sent, the essay will be subject to a late penalty.

All work you submit to the course is for class readership – in other words, we will use essays and excerpts from the writers in the class (possibly yours!) as some of our texts this semester. If at any point you submit a draft or revision that you would prefer other students not read, **please let me know that** – but please don't make that request about everything you turn in this semester.

## Deadlines

For many class meetings, you will have due a response paper or some other reading or writing exercise to help you develop the essay for that unit. Our work together in class will also often be based on those assignments. For those reasons, it is imperative that you turn your work in on time. Of course, even in the most carefully organized semesters (and who knows who has ever had one of those) unexpected circumstances arise – therefore each student in this section is allowed ONE 24-hour extension on a response paper, draft or revision during the semester **excluding the final revision of the research paper.** To use that 24-hour extension without penalty, just send me an email *before the due date* informing me that you are using it. You do not require permission from me, but I do want to have a record that you

are taking your extension and not simply late. Otherwise, the work will be counted as late. And beware: taking that one-day extension can mean that you're crunched for time at the beginning of the next unit.

Other than that "wild card" extension, all deadlines in the course are firm. Except in the case of medical or family emergency, I do not grant further extensions. Essay drafts or revisions turned in after the deadline will be penalized a third of a letter-grade on the final essay for each day they are late. It may be that you take this option - all of us have found ourselves behind in college, and I won't judge, but there will be consequences. Again, I *will not judge*. I'll trust your judgment and I'll probably be really sympathetic, but I will uphold my policy. I, too, have been in a position where I decided between the best grade and my best friend. It is up to you to make that choice as you see fit. If you cannot meet a deadline due to a medical emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to produce a note from UHS; in the event of a family emergency, you must contact me right away, and may be required to ask your dean to contact me by e-mail or phone.

## **Revision**

Because of the emphasis this course places on revision, the schedule is designed to allow you as much revision time per essay as possible —**every revision is due one week from your draft conference**. Since you'll have a significant span of days in which to revise, the expectations for this aspect of your work in the course are high. Revision isn't fixing up grammar. Often it entails rewriting entire essays. This is not a sign of failure but rather of growth.

## **Completion of Work**

Because this course is a planned sequence of writing, it is an official Writing Program policy that *you must write all of the assigned essays to pass the course*, and you must write them within the schedule of the course (not in the last few days of the semester after you have fallen behind). If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of an essay by the final due date in that essay unit, you will receive a letter reminding you of these requirements. The letter will specify the new date by which you must submit the late work. If you fail to submit at least a substantial draft of the essay by this new date (unless you have documented a medical problem), you are eligible to be officially excluded from the course and failed.

## **Policy on Collaboration**

It is vital, in acknowledging the Honor Code, to be clear on what forms of collaboration are acceptable in any course at Harvard. The following kinds of collaboration are permitted in this course: developing or refining ideas in conversation with other students or through peer review of written work (including feedback from Writing Center tutors). If you would like to acknowledge the impact someone had on your essay, it is customary, kind, and looks really slick to do this in a footnote at the beginning of the paper. As stated in the *Student Handbook*, "Students need not acknowledge discussion with others of general approaches to the assignment or assistance with proofreading." However, all work submitted for this course must be your own: in other words, writing response papers, drafts or revisions with other students is expressly forbidden.

## **Academic Honesty**

Throughout the semester we'll work on the proper use of sources, including how to cite and how to avoid plagiarism. You should always feel free to ask me questions about this material. All the work that you submit for this course must be your own, and that work should not make use of outside sources unless that is explicitly part of the assignment. Any student submitting plagiarized work is eligible to fail the course and to be subject to disciplinary action by the Honor Council.

You will be required to acknowledge the honor code twice in this course – the first time on the first draft of your first paper, and the second time on the final revision of your second essay.

## **Writing Center**

At any stage of the writing process – brainstorming ideas, reviewing drafts, or approaching revisions – you may want some extra attention on your essays. The Writing Center (located on the garden level of the Barker Center) offers hour-long appointments with trained tutors. I can't stress strongly enough the benefit of the service they provide; regardless of the "strength" or "weakness" of the essay, any piece of writing benefits from further review and a fresh perspective. Visit the Writing Center's web site at <http://writingcenter.fas.harvard.edu> to make an appointment. Tutors also hold drop-in office hours at other campus locations; see the Writing Center website for details.

# Submitting Essays

Following the guidelines below will ensure that I can focus on your ideas and your prose when I read your essays, rather than devoting time to issues of formatting, pagination, etc.<sup>1</sup> The guidelines apply both to essay drafts and revisions. Forgetting to check your essays for these matters can result in a lower grade for the essay. \*Everyone skips this and gets it wrong, so why don't you take a moment here to just shoot me an email about what your favorite cartoon is and why.\*

## **Format:**

All essays should adhere to the standard format:

- double-space in a reasonable font, with one-inch margins. If you don't know what a reasonable font is you can't go wrong with Times New Roman, 12 point.
- ***number all pages and paragraphs*** – at the beginning of each paragraph just put a numeral (1 for the beginning of the intro and so on). There's no standard format to this, and this isn't Harvard wide – this is a me thing. I want to be able to discuss essays with you by saying “in paragraph 3 you say that...”
- include your name, the course title, my name, the date, the essay number and your essay title on the first page (don't use a title page) (I hate title pages) (we'll get into this later).
- include your name on each subsequent page
- proofread thoroughly for typographical, grammatical, and punctuation errors. While I do not grade down for typos or small grammar mistakes, consistent, repeated errors will lower the grades on your essays. If you're anxious about grammar, several style books or websites can help - I particularly recommend <https://owl.english.purdue.edu/owl/> which can answer just about any question you might have. We also have an English Language and Grammar tutor I will be telling you about!
- use the specified method of citing sources – the first two essays are MLA parenthetical citations, the final is Chicago style. Consult the *Harvard Guide to Using Sources* or google Purdue OWL for the appropriate citation information.

Please consult the unit calendar for details on what needs to be submitted with each draft and revision, and where each should be turned in.

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<sup>1</sup> Consider this my first (of many) Harvard Hacks: I know it is petty, but there is something about a poorly formatted essay that makes instructor's blood boil. It feels sloppy, and frankly a bit rude. I mention this not to tell you I'm a jerk, but rather as friendly warning. All your instructors feel this way. If you don't want them reading your essay while annoyed with you (and, honestly, you don't) pay attention to submission guidelines.

At this point in getting through the syllabus, please reply to the email you sent a while ago and name the kind of pet you would most like to own.

**And a word to the wise:**

*Keep a copy of all your work*, and be sure to avoid computer disaster: you should both regularly save your work and periodically save to the cloud or an external hard drive (in other words, you should never be in the position of having "finished" an essay or revision with nothing to show for it if your computer crashes.) Yes, this seems unnecessary to note in 2017. Yes, I have also had students *within the last year* lose all their work on an essay. Yes, I agree, that seems weird to me, too, but here we are.